Human Resources and Social Development Canada
Ressources humaines et Développement social Canada

People • Partnerships • Knowledge

Skills and Employment

Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Organizational Needs Assessment

The Organizational Needs Assessment provides a framework for conducting a basic Essential Skills needs assessment in your organization. Using this tool will help you determine whether Essential Skills gaps are affecting your organization's performance and identify which skills may require upgrading.

WP-060-03-08E

Canada

Introduction

Are you experiencing any of the following issues in your workplace:

- ❑ High staff turnover?
- ❑ High absenteeism?
- ❑ Low motivation and/or productivity?
- ❑ Employees who resist change?
- ❑ On-the-job accidents?
- ❑ Difficulty meeting your business goals?

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, you may have an Essential Skills issue within your organization.

Essential Skills are the skills that people need for work, learning and life. They are common across all Canadian occupational groups and provide the foundation for learning other skills. There are nine Essential Skills:

Reading	Writing	Thinking
Document Use	Oral Communication	Computer Use
Numeracy	Working with Others	Continuous Learning

The Organizational Needs Assessment (ONA) contains two sections:

Section 1: Essential Skills Assessment

This section contains a basic needs assessment for your organization. It allows you to determine whether skills gaps are impacting your business performance.

Section 2: Assessment Results Chart

This section contains a chart that can help identify Essential Skills training needs for your organization.

Best Practices

- ✓ There are nine Essential Skills. You may choose to assess one, several or all of them.
- ✓ You can use the ONA to examine the Essential Skills of your organization as a whole or to assess specific department(s) (e.g. Accounting) or groups of employees (e.g. all entry-level positions).
- ✓ Consider asking managers to complete *Section 1: Essential Skills Assessment* for their team or department. They may have valuable input into the current skills situation in your organization.
- ✓ Consider asking employees to complete *Section 1: Essential Skills Assessment* for their area of the organization, and compare your results with theirs. Even if you do not include employees in the assessment process, you may want to share your results with them.
- ✓ Communicate regularly with employees as your organization moves forward in addressing any Essential Skills gaps. Open lines of communication will improve employee motivation and buy-in.
- ✓ Look for positive results, such as higher morale, lower absenteeism and increased productivity after Essential Skills upgrading has been implemented.
- ✓ For more information on Essential Skills and other related tools, visit ***hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills.***

SECTION 1:
Essential Skills *Assessment*

READING

Reading refers to understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs (e.g. letters, manuals).

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Refer to written materials when searching for information.
- ❑ Read and understand simple texts, such as product labels, emails or memos.
- ❑ Read and understand written instructions, such as work orders.
- ❑ Skim lengthier texts for overall meaning and key ideas.
- ❑ Identify relevant and irrelevant information in texts.
- ❑ Find key pieces of information in complex or formal documents, such as service contracts.
- ❑ Analyze and integrate information from several sources.
- ❑ Refer to manuals for information on how to complete work tasks.
- ❑ Read and understand complex texts, such as company policies or training manuals.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

READING

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

DOCUMENT USE

Document Use refers to using and understanding labels, graphs, signs and other similar materials.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Find information in a document.
- ❑ Enter information into simple forms or charts, such as checklists or overtime forms.
- ❑ Enter information into complex forms or charts, such as annual budgets or production schedules.
- ❑ Understand simple charts, graphs or drawings, such as phone lists or hazardous materials labels.
- ❑ Understand complex charts, graphs or drawings, such as blueprints or product specifications.
- ❑ Compare information from a variety of charts and/or graphs.
- ❑ Integrate and analyze information from a variety of charts and/or graphs.
- ❑ Create charts or graphs, such as work schedules or production reports.
- ❑ Create sketches or drawings by hand or with software, such as scale drawings.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

DOCUMENT USE

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

NUMERACY

Numeracy refers to using and understanding numbers.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Perform simple calculations, such as addition or subtraction.
- ❑ Perform more complex calculations, such as multiplication or division.
- ❑ Perform complex or multi-step operations, such as calculating averages or percentages.
- ❑ Convert numbers from one unit of measurement to another, such as inches to feet or Canadian dollars to U.S. dollars.
- ❑ Perform financial transactions, such as settling cash payments or preparing bills.
- ❑ Measure quantities or dimensions, such as the area of a room.
- ❑ Analyze or compare numerical data to identify trends or compile statistics.
- ❑ Plan or monitor schedules and/or budgets.
- ❑ Make estimations when values are unknown, such as the amount of time required to complete a task.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

NUMERACY

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

WRITING

Writing refers to writing text or typing on a computer.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Write brief text that is less than a paragraph, such as log entries or reminder notes.
- ❑ Write text that is a paragraph or longer, such as memos or letters.
- ❑ Write text using correct grammar and spelling.
- ❑ Write with a clear purpose, such as to inform or to request information.
- ❑ Write informal text intended for familiar audiences, such as notes to coworkers.
- ❑ Write formal text using a structured format, such as letters to customers or suppliers.
- ❑ Write text using an appropriate tone for the occasion, such as a compassionate or an apologetic tone.
- ❑ Write text that requires original content that varies from one instance to the next, such as a business plan or a proposal.
- ❑ Influence the actions or ideas of others through writing.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

WRITING

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication refers to using speech to share thoughts and information.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Use various types of oral communication, such as in person or by telephone.
- ❑ Use proper grammar and pronunciation when speaking.
- ❑ Adapt tone, vocabulary and body language to different situations or audiences.
- ❑ Communicate information clearly and concisely, such as leaving detailed telephone messages.
- ❑ Understand information that is presented orally, such as detailed work instructions.
- ❑ Communicate comfortably with a variety of audiences, such as customers or supervisors.
- ❑ Provide sufficient context to limit the need for clarification or more information.
- ❑ Seek information by asking clear questions.
- ❑ Express personal opinions and participate in group discussions.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

ORAL COMMUNICATION

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Working with Others refers to interacting with others to complete tasks.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees can be counted on to:

- ❑ Share information with others willingly.
- ❑ Take time to help others with their work.
- ❑ Work cooperatively in a group to achieve common goals.
- ❑ Complete assigned tasks when working with others.
- ❑ Demonstrate respect for the ideas and expertise of others.
- ❑ Resolve conflicts when working with others.
- ❑ Take on leadership roles, such as mentors or advisors.
- ❑ Ask for help when required.
- ❑ Work independently when required.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

WORKING WITH OTHERS

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

THINKING

Thinking refers to reviewing information to make decisions.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Recognize and identify problems.
- ❑ Identify reasonable options to address a problem.
- ❑ Evaluate options and choose the best course of action when confronted with a problem or a decision.
- ❑ Assess the effectiveness of a solution and make adjustments if needed.
- ❑ Make reasonable assumptions when information is unavailable.
- ❑ Find and apply relevant information required to complete a work task.
- ❑ Organize work tasks effectively, according to level of priority.
- ❑ Memorize information required for different job tasks.
- ❑ Use previous experiences to help solve new problems or make decisions.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

COMPUTER USE

Computer Use refers to using computers and other technical tools (e.g. fax machine).

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Use different forms of technology, such as photocopiers, cash registers or two-way radios.
- ❑ Perform basic interactions with a computer, such as logging on or printing a file.
- ❑ Use word processing software to perform tasks such as producing or formatting text.
- ❑ Use spreadsheet software to perform tasks such as entering or organizing data.
- ❑ Use databases to perform tasks such as finding or verifying information.
- ❑ Use a variety of email functions, such as sending attachments or emailing a group of people.
- ❑ Use company-specific software, such as financial or design software.
- ❑ Use the Internet to perform tasks such as searching for information.
- ❑ Use computer skills to increase the efficiency and/or the quality of work.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

COMPUTER USE

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Proceed to the next skill you would like to assess, or refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

Essential Skills *Assessment*

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Continuous Learning refers to participating in an ongoing process of gaining skills and knowledge (e.g. workplace training).

ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS

Read each statement carefully. Check off any statements that accurately reflect your workplace.

Generally, employees are able to:

- ❑ Develop a learning plan with guidance.
- ❑ Seek learning opportunities, materials and/or resources.
- ❑ Learn from past experiences and apply lessons learned to new situations.
- ❑ Try new ways of doing things.
- ❑ Learn from the expertise of others.
- ❑ Actively participate in training.
- ❑ Apply new skills and knowledge.
- ❑ Ensure skills remain up-to-date.
- ❑ Recognize individual learning styles, such as learning by seeing, hearing or doing.

MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS

Create personalized statements below. Use them to replace any statements that are not applicable to your workplace.

- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

TOTAL STATEMENTS

*Count the **total** number of statements you checked off under 'ASSESSMENT STATEMENTS' and 'MY ALTERNATIVE STATEMENTS'.*

- ❑ 0-2 statements
- ❑ 3-6 statements
- ❑ 7-9 statements

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

IMPACT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Check off any areas where you believe this skill is having a negative impact.

- ❑ Level of productivity
- ❑ Product or service quality
- ❑ Customer or supplier relations
- ❑ Employee relations
- ❑ Internal communication
- ❑ Personnel development and training
- ❑ Workplace safety
- ❑ Organizational capacity for change
- ❑ Other: _____

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LEVEL OF IMPACT

Check off the overall level of impact you believe this skill is having on your business performance.

- ❑ High impact on business performance
- ❑ Medium impact on business performance
- ❑ Low impact on business performance

Refer to the Assessment Results Chart on p.23 for more information on interpreting your results.

SECTION 2:

Assessment Results *Chart*

This chart allows you to interpret your assessment results. It will help you determine whether there are skills that may require upgrading in your organization.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Refer to your results under **TOTAL STATEMENTS** and **LEVEL OF IMPACT** for the first skill you assessed in *Section 1: Essential Skills Assessment*.
2. Using your results, locate the corresponding row and column in the chart.
3. Write the name of the skill in the corresponding cell on the chart.
4. Locate the cell colour in the **CELL COLOUR GUIDE** (below the chart) to interpret your results.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 for each skill you assessed.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS CHART:

		Level of impact		
		High	**Medium**	**Low**
Total statements	0-2 statements			
	3-6 statements			
	7-9 statements			

CELL COLOUR GUIDE:

- This Essential Skill ***likely requires upgrading*** in your workplace. For information and resources related to implementing a workplace training program, visit the Essential Skills website at ***hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills***.
- This Essential Skill ***may require upgrading*** in your workplace. Consider asking front-line employees and/or managers for additional input, or re-assess different areas of the organization individually.
- This Essential Skill is ***not likely an issue*** in your workplace. Re-assess this skill if conditions change in your workplace (e.g. staff turnover; introduction of new technology).

NOTES